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Imagery analysis report

Shock Brigades at Namdae-chon North Korea (

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SHOCK BRIGADES AT NAMDAE-CHON, NORTH KOREA

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INTRODUCTION

1. [] This report discusses the relocation, organization, and disposition of the five North Korean shock brigades which dismantled and vacated their garrison in the Hwangsuwon valley during 1979. New facilities for these brigades were observed under construction in the Namdae-chon area during 1979. This report which contains a map and 14 photographs has an information cutoff date of 1 March 1980.

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BACKGROUND

2. [] In 1975, the North Korean Army formed a large, unique military force consisting of five shock brigades in a remote area of northeastern North Korea. This force was unlike any other in North Korea or in any other Communist country. The garrisons for the five brigades were constructed in the Hwangsuwon valley in the northern 7th Corps. The facilities at Hwangsuwon Barracks and Training Area [] housed approximately 15,000 personnel in more than 1,000 military buildings. The overall size of the facility, its composition and isolation, and the extent of associated training facilities all attested to the uniqueness of this force.

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3. [] the shock brigades occupying the Hwangsuwon complex dismantled and vacated the facility and began constructing a new garrison in the Namdae-chon area, 45 kilometers (km) southeast of the original facility. To date, no specific reason for the relocation of the brigades from Hwangsuwon to Namdae-chon has been determined.

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DESCRIPTION

4. [] The five shock brigades which were housed in the Hwangsuwon complex were observed on [] late April 1979 establishing a new base in the Namdae-chon area (Figure 1), 45 km southeast of Hwangsuwon. By early June 1979, over 300 new buildings were observed under construction in the new area. Construction of facilities for all five brigades continued at an accelerated pace throughout the summer and fall of 1979. By late fall, approximately 1,450 military buildings and 400 dependent quarters were externally complete or nearly complete. With most garrison facilities complete, the construction effort during December 1979 was directed toward building training facilities similar to those which had been at Hwangsuwon.

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5. [] The new complex at Namdae-chon is widely dispersed throughout the valley in a 30- by 15-km area. The five brigades—Namdae-chon A [], Namdae-chon B [], Namdae-chon C [], Namdae-chon D [], and Namdae-chon E []—are physically separated by the rugged, mountainous terrain (Figure 1). The subordinates of each brigade are widely dispersed in company- and battalion-sized compounds throughout the brigade area. Analysis of imagery of the five brigades revealed that their overall unit composition remained similar to that initially seen at Hwangsuwon. The overall functional composition of each brigade consists of a brigade headquarters (bde hq) with support elements, three infantry battalions (inf bns), a tank battalion, a 120mm mortar battalion (mort bn), a truck-mounted antiaircraft (AA) battalion, a probable ranger/commando battalion, a 107mm towed multiple-rocket launcher (MRL) company, one to three military storage areas, and a brigade motor pool/maintenance area. Several clusters of dependents quarters are dispersed throughout each brigade area.

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6. [] During detailed analysis of the units deployed at Namdae-chon, it became apparent that there were three variations of infantry battalions in each brigade. These variations are consistent throughout the five brigades. In order to maintain continuity in reporting the three types of battalions, NPIC has designated the units Type I, Type II, and Type III infantry battalions. The difference between the three variations of infantry battalions are:

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a. Type I consists of a normal infantry battalion headquarters, three similar infantry companies, and a mortar company with their facilities aligned in a regular pattern (Figure 2),

b. Type II contains a normal infantry battalion headquarters, three similar infantry companies, and a mortar company with their facilities widely dispersed and irregularly aligned throughout the battalion area (Figure 3), and

c. Type III contains a large battalion headquarters area with only three infantry company barracks areas which are aligned in a regular pattern (Figure 4).

7. [] Each of the five brigade headquarters areas contains barracks, an E-shaped headquarters building, a large auditorium, two to five adjacent support companies, and a nearby large artillery and infantry training area (Figure 5).

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8. [] The three fire support units (mortar, AA, and MRL) of each brigade are immediately adjacent to each other and share common training facilities in four brigade areas (Figure 6).

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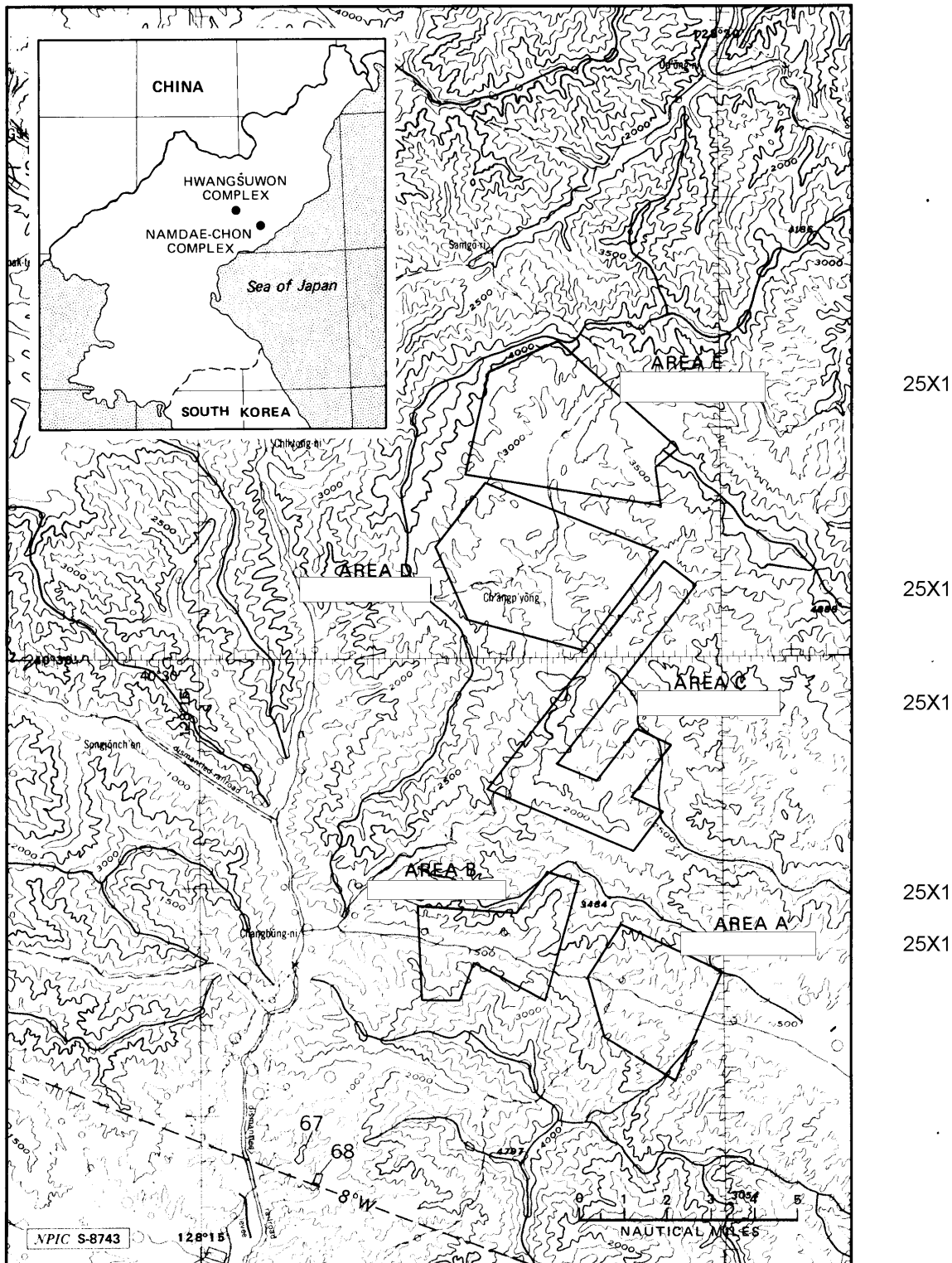


FIGURE 1. LOCATIONS OF THE NAMDAE-CHON AND HWANGSUWON COMPLEXES, NORTH KOREA. Overall deployment of the five shock brigades within the Namdae-chon complex

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9. [] In the tank battalion areas, a varied amount of shedding has been observed to cover the tanks. The tanks were completely covered in three of the brigade areas by mid-September. One area was partially shedded at that time, but construction ceased and the storage sheds have remained unchanged since mid-September. [] no preparation of any kind was observed to cover the tanks in the fifth battalion area (Figures 7 and 8).

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10. [] Analysis of imagery of the training facilities which have been constructed throughout the entire complex reveals that they are similar to the ones that had been constructed at Hwangsuwon prior to its evacuation. Training facilities observed in the Namdae-chon complex consist of company- and battalion-sized assault courses; multidistance small-arms ranges; small-arms, mortar, and MRL firing positions; artillery miniature ranges; tank driving and subcaliber ranges; mockup tanks, artillery, trucks, large-caliber truck-mounted rocket launchers, and aircraft; and aircraft silhouettes. Of all the training aids observed at Namdae-chon, only the aircraft mockup and silhouettes were never detected at Hwangsuwon (Figures 9 and 10).

11. [] The locations and dispositions of all major functional elements of the five brigades, as they are deployed in the Namdae-chon complex, are depicted in Figures 11 through 15. The functional designation of the integral subordinate elements which are consistent throughout the five brigades (A through E) are as follows:

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- 1 Brigade headquarters, support units, and training facilities
- 2 Infantry battalion (Type I)
- 3 Infantry battalion (Type II)
- 4 Infantry battalion (Type III)
- 5 Tank battalion
- 6 120mm mortar battalion
- 7 Truck-mounted AA battalion
- 8 Ranger/commando battalion
- 9 107mm towed MRL company
- 10 Brigade-level storage areas

Detailed reporting of facilities and equipment will be maintained in the Installation Data File (IDF).

IMAGERY ANALYST'S COMMENTS

12. [] Despite close monitoring since the five brigades were first observed moving from Hwangsuwon [] no specific reason for their relocation has been apparent. As of mid-September 1979, no evidence of land reclamation, major construction projects, or indications of any epidemics in or adjacent to the abandoned area were observed at Hwangsuwon. The Namdae-chon complex is 45 km closer to the railheads on the coastal rail system. In addition to the improved physical proximity to the rail system, the new location eliminates the need for movement over the rugged, mountainous terrain between Hwangsuwon and Namdae-chon. Movement over this mountainous area would be time consuming and treacherous under certain weather conditions. An obvious difference between the garrisons at Hwangsuwon and Namdae-chon is an increased effort to disperse and to cover/conceal the activity in the Namdae-chon area. However, the reasons for obvious attempts at cover/concealment in some brigade areas and the lack of like activity in other brigades are unknown. Finally, for whatever reasons the North Koreans had for moving the personnel and much of the material between these two complexes, this move had to be expensive.

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REFERENCES

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MAPS OR CHARTS

DMA, US Air Target Chart, Series 200, Sheet 0290-24, scale 1:200,000 (UNCLASSIFIED)

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